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Seventieth session
Geneva, 9 March 2015

Report of the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget on its seventieth session

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, on 9 March 2015

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Introduction

The seventieth session of the Working Party on Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget was held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland, on 9 March 2015, to review the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD.

I. Action by the Working Party at its seventieth session

Review of the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD

1. At its closing plenary meeting, on 9 March 2015, the Working Party on the Strategic Framework and the Programme Budget took note of the report on the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD, as contained in document TD/B/WP/269.

II. Chair's summary

A. Opening statements

2. The following speakers made opening statements: the Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD; the representative of the Philippines, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China; the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, on behalf of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean Countries; the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania, on behalf of the African Group; the representative of Benin, on behalf of the least developed countries; the representative of the European Union (Latvia), on behalf of the European Union and its member States; the representative of Canada, on behalf of the JUSSCANNZ group; the representative of China; the representative of Ecuador; the representative of Kenya; the representative of Morocco; the representative of Algeria; the representative of South Africa; the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo; the representative of Bangladesh; the representative of Brazil; the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania; and the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

3. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD summarized the progress made in the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD and the results of the 2014 readership survey.

4. The representatives of many regional groups and delegations noted the progress UNCTAD had made in communications, including building a stronger profile on social media and improving the content available on the website. The 15 per cent increase in the number of website visitors was commended, as was the Twitter account of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

5. The representatives of several regional groups expressed satisfaction with UNCTAD efforts to reach out to different stakeholders, including civil society, the private sector, universities and the general public, and to adapt communications methods to each audience. The What's New alerts provided timely and useful information for delegates, and the Geneva Dialogues helped to engage the Geneva-based international organizations and

delegates. The representative of one regional group expressed appreciation of the importance that UNCTAD placed on civil society.

B. Informal meetings

6. The Working Party pursued its deliberations in an informal setting.

C. Review of the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD

(Agenda item 3)

7. The Deputy Secretary-General of UNCTAD introduced the substantive item on the agenda, presenting the report on the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD (TD/B/WP/269) and the report on the readership survey of main publications of UNCTAD (TD/B/WP(70)/CRP.1) in 2014.

8. On the communications strategy, key areas of progress in 2014 were digital communications; developing tailored products for delegates, journalists and civil society; and a number of high-level events, including the events to mark the fiftieth anniversary of UNCTAD.

9. With regard to the publications policy, the number of publications continued to be streamlined. More copies were distributed on flash drives rather than as hard copies, which were reserved for African countries and the least developed countries. The Publications Committee had improved coordination within UNCTAD, and the policy clearance process had been simplified.

10. UNCTAD publications covered in the 2014 readership survey received an average positive score of 4.2 out of 5.

11. The representatives of some regional groups made suggestions to improve UNCTAD information products. One suggestion was to provide presentations made by the secretariat in small file sizes and thus enable officials working in the field to open them. Reports of meetings could include highlights, sidebars and contact details of delegates. UNCTAD should also look for new ways to tell the story of its work, for example, through successful technical assistance projects.

12. Some delegations made suggestions for future implementation reports, namely to provide more data, where possible, to assess the effectiveness of communications activities. These included providing more detailed statistics on the number of reports downloaded and the number of recipients of different newsletters, as well as the reach of the organization's messages on social media among key demographics. A shorter, more analytical report would be useful.

13. Many delegations underscored that shifting to electronic copies for publications might be ideal, but noted that the digital divide was a reality for many developing countries and should be taken into account. Hard copies of publications and documents would therefore continue to be necessary. Furthermore, the timely translation of publications into the official languages of the United Nations was essential to avoid marginalizing developing countries from the intergovernmental process. Another delegation noted the continued progress in the release and translation of meeting documents and encouraged the secretariat to continue in that direction, as well as to continue improving the speed of online publication of official documents on the Delegates Portal.

14. Several delegations highlighted the need for better coordination between the UNCTAD secretariat and Geneva-based missions when inviting experts from different countries to meetings. Some delegations requested access to the contact details of all staff members of the UNCTAD secretariat and an organization chart to be published on the Delegates Portal to facilitate easier contact and information sharing.

15. Many delegations also requested information on the communications strategy for the upcoming fourteenth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD XIV) in March 2016 in Lima.

16. The representatives of some regional groups emphasized that the communications strategy should be seen in a wider organizational context and that, in addition to strong communications and outreach, the intergovernmental pillar of the UNCTAD mandate needed to be reinvigorated.

17. The secretariat responded to several questions and comments from delegations.

18. With regard to the suggestion to have user-friendly documents and make presentations available in an easily accessible electronic format, the secretariat noted current efforts in that direction. Two examples were UNCTAD policy briefs, which helped delegates to report to their countries, and the graphic representation of the history of UNCTAD.[1]

19. In response to questions on the communications strategy for UNCTAD XIV, the secretariat noted that a plan would be prepared as on previous occasions. Member States would soon be requested to participate actively in the planning exercise.

20. The secretariat would aim at improving on the paper-smart approach used at the Doha Conference. In relation to this, the secretariat acknowledged the need to continue to produce hard copies of publications. The reduction in the number of copies of publications would not influence distribution to countries where downloading large files was not easy. The secretariat also noted the suggestion of including a question on the issue, such as whether hard copies of publications were desired or not, in the readership survey.

21. The secretariat also acknowledged the request to make future annual reports on the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy shorter and more analytical. A more analytical report, with data and social media analysis, would require specialized expertise and probably resources.

22. On communicating with Geneva-based missions when the UNCTAD secretariat invited national experts or in relation to other communications with Governments, the secretariat noted that this was UNCTAD policy and thanked delegates for drawing attention to the issue. In this regard, the secretariat also noted that contacting staff members through division directors ensured no confusion or omission in communications with delegates.

23. With regard to the lack of cross-linkages between the UNCTAD website and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations website, the secretariat noted that a link to the Department was available on the UNCTAD website.[2]

24. The recurrent issue of the timely translation of UNCTAD documentation required a distinction to be made. Significant improvement had been made on parliamentary documents, with 100 per cent of those documents submitted for translation on time in 2013 and 2014. The translation of publications and documents, however, was a problem largely

[1] See http://unctad.org/en/pages/AllPolicyBriefs.aspx; https://prezi.com/edxrb7gntxbj/unctad-history-in-the-making/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy.

[2] http://unctad.org/en/Pages/About%20UNCTAD/Post-2015.aspx.

out of the reach of UNCTAD, with decreasing resources allocated to the Division of Conference Management of United Nations Office at Geneva for translation.

25. The revised clearance policy noted in the implementation report (TD/B/WP/269) was designed to reduce bottlenecks. Major publications (flagships) were cleared by the Office of the Secretary-General, while all other publications were now cleared by divisions, which had a responsibility to ensure an internal peer review process and thus maintain a standard of quality.

26. The secretariat stated that a staff member to act as liaison for the African Group should be forthcoming.

D. Consideration of the outcome of the session
(Agenda item 3)

27. The representatives of several regional groups agreed that the fact that the outcome of the session would be only the Chair's summary, rather than negotiated agreed conclusions, did not set a precedent for future sessions of the Working Party.

28. The representative of one regional group would have preferred to have agreed conclusions, as delegates heard converging views on the value of the exercise and ways to improve it. The representative of another regional group further noted the progress made in implementing the communications strategy and the publications policy, and encouraged the secretariat to continue the promotion of and outreach for all programme publications, to enhance the impact and visibility of UNCTAD in the areas of its work.

29. The representative of another regional group considered it worthwhile to continue with the secretariat's report on agenda item 3, and the related exchange with delegations, and would welcome further discussions on the scope and length of that report. The delegation was also open to transparent and inclusive discussions on the working methods of the Working Party.

III. Organizational matters

A. Election of officers
(Agenda item 1)

30. The Working Party elected Mr. Aleksandr Tselyuk (Belarus) as its Chair and Mr. Fredrick Matwang'a (Kenya) as its Vice-Chair-cum-Rapporteur.

B. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
(Agenda item 2)

31. The Working Party adopted its provisional agenda (TD/B/WP/268). The agenda was thus as follows:

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Review of the implementation of the communications strategy and publications policy of UNCTAD
4. Provisional agenda for the seventy-first session of the Working Party

5. Other business

6. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

C. Provisional agenda for the seventy-first session of the Working Party

(Agenda item 4)

32. At its closing plenary meeting on 9 March 2015, the Working Party approved the provisional agenda for its seventy-first session (see annex I).

D. Other business

(Agenda item 5)

33. The Working Party did not consider any other issues.

E. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

(Agenda item 6)

34. The Working Party authorized the Chair and the Rapporteur to finalize the report on its seventieth session.

Annex I

Provisional agenda for the seventy-first session of the Working Party

1. Election of officers
2. Adoption of the agenda and organization of work
3. Review of the technical cooperation activities of UNCTAD and their financing
4. Evaluation of UNCTAD activities:
   (a) Evaluation of UNCTAD activities: Overview
   (b) External evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 3: International trade
   (c) Follow-up on evaluations:

   Progress report on the implementation of recommendations from the external evaluation of UNCTAD subprogramme 2: Investment and enterprise
5. Provisional agenda for the seventy-second session of the Working Party
6. Other business
7. Adoption of the report of the Working Party to the Trade and Development Board

Annex II

Attendance[3]

1. Representatives from the following States members of the Working Party attended the session.

Austria
Belarus
Chile
China
Finland
Germany
Guatemala
India
Italy
Panama
Switzerland

2. Representatives from the following States members of UNCTAD but not members of the Working Party attended the session:

Algeria
Argentina
Bangladesh
Brazil
Burundi
Canada
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Democratic Republic of the Congo
Dominican Republic
Ecuador
Estonia
Ethiopia
France
Greece
Indonesia
Iraq
Jordan
Kenya
Latvia
Libya
Madagascar
Mexico
Morocco
Nepal
Oman
Pakistan
Philippines
Poland
Republic of Moldova
Saudi Arabia
Spain
Togo
United Republic of Tanzania
Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

3. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented at the session:

European Union
South Centre

[3] This attendance list contains registered participants. For the list of participants, see TD/B/WP(70)/INF.1.